

Meta: BBC Sherlock , series 1, episode 3, The Great Game (TGG)

by mazaher

March 8, 2013

::

::

::

We have been rewatching FINA in the Granada version *twice* in the last few weeks at <http://fennishjournal.livejournal.com/>. Now it's the turn of TGG, and I must say it came to hit on a different part of my feelings from the other few times I watched it: a bit like when you've walked a lot, your feet hurt, and you begin stepping a little differently to ease the stress...

Unbetaed, unrevised, because I just don't have time. Apologies.

The main discussion on TGG is again hosted by fennishjournal at

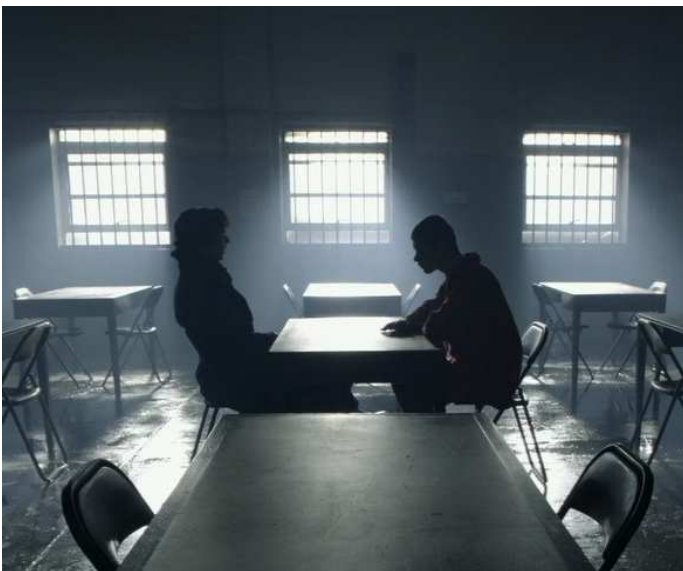
<http://fennishjournal.livejournal.com/>. Caps from <http://sc.aithine.org>: great job, thank you!

::

My notes, in chronological order:

1. Minsk:

Underneath the surface of black humour of the scene (Sherlock the grammar Nazi!), what shocks me is the attitude of the murderer. His unrepentant ruthlessness, coupled with his obvious belief that he can do no wrong, contrasts drastically with Sherlock's personality. Sherlock does lack compassion (more about the point later) and demands from the world at large the same perfection he demands of himself, *but* he doesn't commit crimes. Or if he does, they are crimes against the law (e.g. drug use), not against individual people who haven't harmed him.



2. Indoor shooting:

This is casual shooting, not canon!Holmes' careful target practice. While canon!Holmes has rigidly, almost ascetically channeled his whole energy into self-discipline aimed at maximum efficiency, Sherlock's energy leaks all over the place.

Perhaps the difference is that, while imo both feel an inner coercion to be perfect, Holmes has a concept of duty as something valid in principle, while Sherlock looks more directly to the result, i.e. relief from intolerable pressure, and casual shooting works occasionally as a shortcut of sorts.

Or perhaps Sherlock merely set his hands on John's gun and began fiddling like a monkey.



3. The blog:

In hindsight, this is the beginning of the problems with John's blog.

It is curious how the fandom doesn't seem to have given enough attention to John's blog and its causal relationship with TRF. At this point, Sherlock is flattered. While he gets plenty of recognition from his clients (Mrs. Hudson, Angelo...), he is chronically starved for recognition from sources he deems authoritative, so it's natural that he is. But exactly flattered by what? Imo, the key is not *public* recognition, but *John's* recognition. All through the two series, we see Sherlock spurning public accolades (Mycroft "threatening" him with a knighthood – again; press events after cases solved in ASiB...) and instead barely containing his want for John's approval.

John, on his part, is regretfully taking on the part (of which he seems totally unaware) of ...Black Stallion's trainer, who is not satisfied until he can show his treasure to all the world, and never mind if his pet goes through mortal danger in the process. It is the same moral acrobatics which can be found in the final pages of Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, when in a valiant attempt by the author at absolving the whole fiasco with Job, the idea is suggested that perhaps God sends His sons to the massacre in order to show the Devil that they, too, have suffered. (I love Chesterton and *TMWWT* is one of my all-time favourites, but oh how I disagree on the theology).

I think a time will come when the issue will need to be picked up in fic or in meta: it is John's blog that gave Moriarty the perfect weapon against Sherlock's public image. It is John's blog that burned Sherlock. It's a good thing that John doesn't seem aware of this, not until the very end of series 2. It's hard enough for the poor chap without this realisation.

4. Variations of the theme:

"Stop inflicting your opinions on the world" can imo be translated from the sherlockese into English as "Stop opening doors for the world to inflict their opinions on me".

Donovan sniggering about John's blog: the hole in the dam already leaking.

5. After the gas explosion on Baker Street, John pushes his way through in much the same way as he'll try to do at St. Bart's in TRF.



6. Mycroft: "Sofa, Sherlock, it was the sofa", like canon! Mycroft correcting his younger brother's deductions from the window at the Diogenes' Club in GREE.



7. Sherlock is summoned by Lestrade after a dry spell, but he's not eager and lively, he's melancholy, like he knows something grave is going to happen.

8. Cruelty and compassion:

Then the first borrowed speaker comes up: a person who may not be innocent (nobody is), but who is completely foreign to criminal machinations. Moriarty takes hold of her and uses her as a mouthpiece, disregarding that she is a person with a story and a will of her own. Sherlock took his distance in Minsk from the passion murder of an emotionally crippled, egotistical idiot; much more he takes his distance here, to the point that when he asks the woman why she's crying, his voice is nothing short of sweet. Cfr. also his smile when the second hostage is saved and his obvious relief when the child is rescued.

It is interesting from this point onwards to check what he says (more or less, "compassion is inefficient") with what can be seen on his face ("compassion is inevitable in the face of deliberate, premeditated cruelty").



9. Framed:

When Sherlock studies the trainer shoes at St. Bart's, there are repeated, alternate views of him through the porthole in the door, which is eerily metaphorical.



10. The dangers of intuition

Sherlock looks so *young* when he remembers Carl Powers.

And very young he is, so much so that he forgets the basic tenets of epistemology (that he knows well and quotes often) and falls head over heels in the trap set by Moriarty for his intuition.

Intuition is the faculty which catches patterns. The good thing is, it jumps straight to the conclusion, giving you a hypothesis to test. The bad thing is, it jumps to conclusions, making you believe there's nothing left to test. (Inquisitors are very fond of intuition).

Moriarty dresses and behaves in such a way that Sherlock allows prejudice free hand, and dismisses Molly's boyfriend from IT as gay—harmless—unwanted-right-now. He never gives the hypothesis a second thought, much less he takes care to test it. Very very bad, Mr.Holmes.

11. John

John at this point doesn't seem to understand much yet about how Sherlock's mind and heart work.

E.g. pip no. 3: Sherlock is perfectly *right* to avoid solving the problem in much less than the allotted 12 hours: if he did, the next allotted time would be much shorter, maybe too short.

True, John's anger would probably have been avoided if Sherlock had taken the pains to explain his reasoning and maybe expressing regret for the extra time the hostage remained in Moriarty's hands. But would the expression of Sherlock's regret to John and maybe the Met changed anything for said hostage during those long hours? No. Ergo, useless waste of time.

Again, John has just seen Sherlock's face when, despite his entreats not to speak about



Moriarty, the old lady is blown up with eleven other persons; yet he starts on a rant about Sherlock not caring, at the exact time when he's devoting all his care to stopping Moriarty. See TSylvestris fic "Sniffer dog" on AO3: it's straight to the point, with the difference that John doesn't seem (yet) quite as good at Sherlock-handling here as the John in the fic.

12. Investing...!

Give your money to the homeless: it's a better investment than giving it to someone like Wilkes.

13. A little lesson

I find it touching that Sherlock tries to explain himself to John with the comment about the beauty of the stars. True, he's still speaking sherlockese, but the effort is remarkable, and I think it has a bearing on John's nod of unqualified trust later at the pool.

14. A question:

Why doesn't John shoot the Golem in his foot or something?

15. Last scene at 221B:

--Sherlock is perched on the chair wearing his coat, visibly ready to take flight toward the great outdoors;

-- John is wrong again, the solar system is only loosely connected with supernovas (lucky for us earthlings).



16. John at the pool:

Brilliant! He blinks SOS in Morse code while Moriarty speaks with his voice. In addition, he speaks in a flat, out-of-tune cadence, different from his usual one. Waits with patient resignation as Sherlock and Moriarty intone their own operatic duet. Tries to save Sherlock. And he shows clearly that his understanding of Sherlock has grown exponentially in the last day or so by The Nod. There is complete trust, not only that Sherlock's plan is going to be effective, but also that it is going to be ethically faultless.



17. Sherlock at the pool:

I think that the final element to make John sure that Sherlock does have a heart, and that it resides exactly where it should, is Sherlock's acknowledgment of John's attempt to save his life.

"That was good" = "You see? I do get it!"

18. Moriarty at the pool:

Moriarty is really, actually scared for a moment. It looks like he didn't in fact know how things would go, and was in for the danger as much as for his more obvious reasons. He feels like he doesn't care a damn for his life, nor for his plans if blowing them up himself turns out to be a more spectacular option. I'd like to see more meta about this Moriarty; I'd love to read technical psycho-meta about him by fennishjournal. I'd like to be able to make head or tail of him, which --so far-- I'm not sure I can.



::